

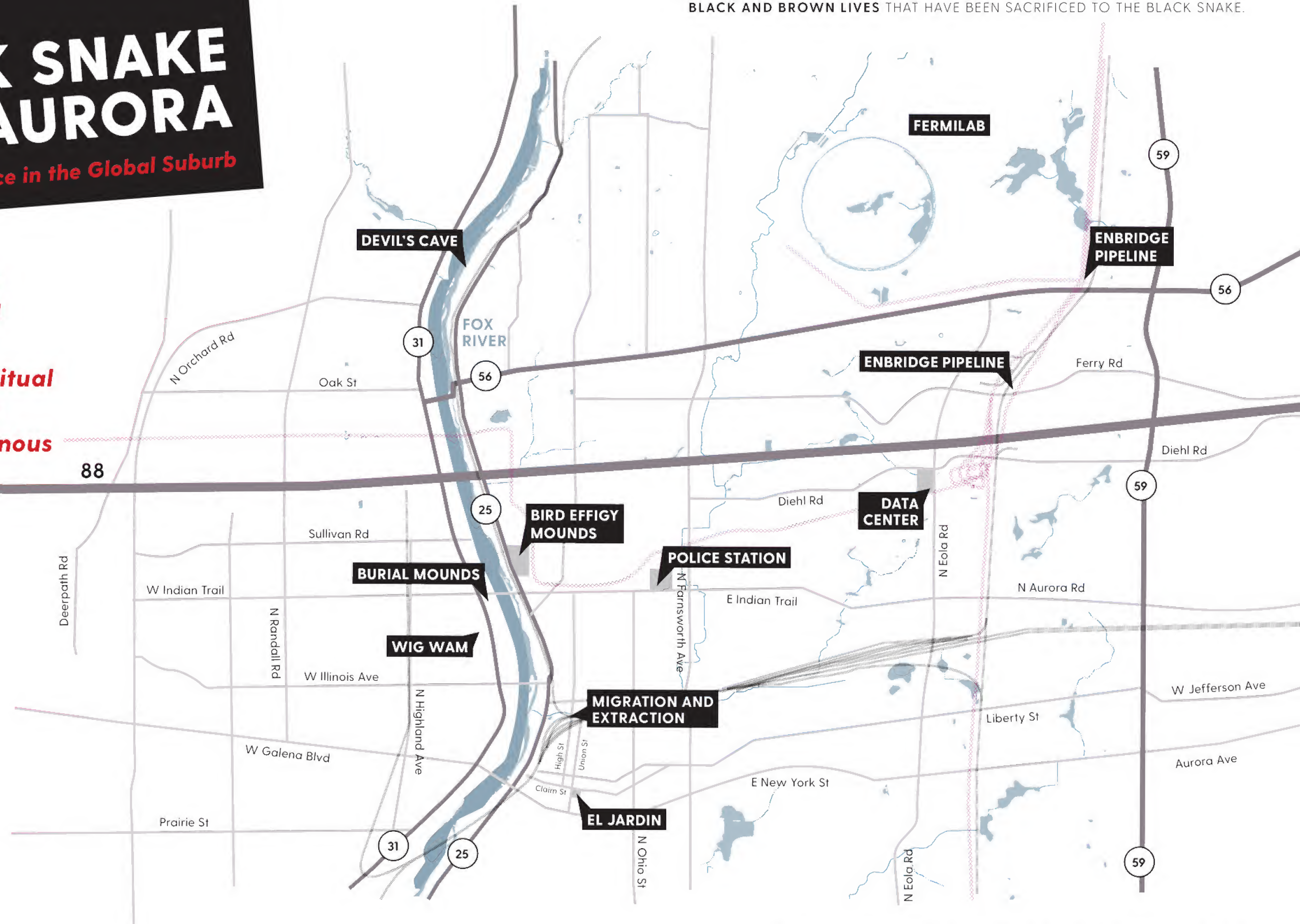
# THE BLACK SNAKE TOUR OF AURORA

*Petrocapitalism and Resistance in the Global Suburb*

*Several of our Lakota and Dakota relatives have had visions and dreams. They have been visited in a spiritual sense and have been told that there is a black poisonous snake trying to come among us. Our relatives have said this.*

Dave Archambault II,  
Chairman Standing Rock Sioux Tribe

DEDICATED TO ANTHONY MARTELL, SANDRA BLAND AND ALL THE INDIGENOUS,  
BLACK AND BROWN LIVES THAT HAVE BEEN SACRIFICED TO THE BLACK SNAKE.



*How can we profit from the blood in these markets?*

Casey Research



**We put together a people's tour of petrocapitalism and resistance in Aurora, IL as part of a larger collaboration on activating knowledges and memory to unsettle the mechanisms of a global suburb.**

The walking version of this tour is around 8 hours and requires no map: start from the Southeast corner of Fermilab and stay right underneath the power lines turning South and West until you hit the river; then go South along the river, cross the tracks and ask residents to guide you to El Jardin. Alternately, join us for the carpool version, which rolls along Indian Trail Road. See you at El Jardin! Facilitators are residents/researchers/troublemakers Ulysses Diaz (Caracol), Ze Puga, and Rozalinda Borcilă. This map was put together in collaboration with Becky Nasadowski. Our pipeline walk is inspired by the work of performance artist and petroleum anthropologist duskin drum.

**FERMILAB  
a story of many universes**

About a dozen indigenous sites, some dated 2,000 years old, have been excavated while building Fermilab. The public is invited to view the prairie restoration and reintroduced bison herds; beneath the ground lies a massive underground machine for testing the rules of particle physics that scientists believe govern the basic building blocks of matter. The theoretical model predicts a Higgs field which fills all of space-time; as particles move within this field they acquire mass. To test this theory, beams of subatomic particles are accelerated and smashed, and detectors measure the energies at various levels of collision. The world's most intense neutrino beam will be generated here, then shot through the earth's mantle to an underground lab in North Dakota, and transnational protocols govern the technological and informational infrastructure that link this lab within global machines. This is the frontline of Big Science, whose computations seek to capture not only the origins of the universe, but also its possible fates: is our universe stable or a long-lived "bubble"?

**ENBRIDGE PIPELINE  
experiments in amateur forensics**

Buried just beneath our feet is an Enbridge petroleum pipeline. Heavy crude oil is ripped from the Alberta tar sands, and light Bakken crude is fracked from the

Dakotas oilfields. The petroleum is then pushed across a sprawling network of pipelines, pumping stations and storage yards on its way to refineries and terminals. It is carried under our feet, moving in spurts and stops at about the same speed as we do when walking. Once it is built, a pipeline network accelerates the processes that take place on all ends of the line—it cements our dependency on more and more extraction, more and more combustion. The way petroleum is carried is mostly invisible, but this carrying works to organize power, territories, people, violence and forgetting.

We are walking and learning to see. When scouting for a location, we start with the lowres maps available online in the public domain; these are not precise, so we must scout on foot for markers. We often find petroleum pipeline markers along existing pathways carved out by canal systems, rail lines, power grids—the routes of power are path-dependent. The pipeline we are walking today is owned by Enbridge, the largest energy transport network on the continent. It carries both tar sands and Bakken crude. Enbridge is also one of the owners of the Dakota Access Pipeline.

**DATA CENTER  
all dollars are Petrodollars**

The Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME) went on a buying spree and purchased the Chicago Board of Trade, the New York Mercantile Exchange, the Dow Jones Indexes, the Kansas City Board of Trade. CME Group now dominates global trading in derivatives and options, which is where the big money-made-from-money is at. Less than 8% of the trade happens through "open call"—what we imagine from TV images of traders yelling at each other as they buy and sell. The rest of the speculative frenzy takes place through computers and electronic networks, on platforms like Globex owned by the CME Group. These networks have an architecture—the crucial

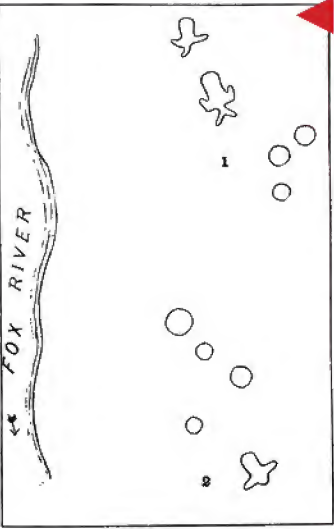
machines and servers are located in this building. It requires enormous amounts of electricity to power the machines, giant fans and water systems cool them, sophisticated back-up power generators and security protocols. The data center is surrounded by microwave towers, the only visible part of ultra-high-speed networks that transmit information about every transaction at speeds that seek zero delay across space: so-called zero latency. Transactions worth millions of dollars pass through this data center at speeds of a fraction of a blink of an eye. The data is beamed through microwave networks to a handful of buildings like this one, housing the engines and servers of the world's other major trading centers. Last year, CME Group reported 3 billion transactions worth approximately \$1 quadrillion moving through this building. From the perspective of global finance, these are the "heaviest" places: the points of greatest mass. Welcome to the center of the financial universe.

**POLICE STATION  
guardians of the racial order**

Maintaining the racial and social order across a vast, dispersed landscape of warehousing districts, residential enclaves, gated communities and impoverished neighborhoods requires an investment in militarization and policing: from the "voluntary" ROTC program of the East Aurora High School, one of the largest in the country, to the new \$120 Million hi-tech police station. Fuck the police. Since the financial and housing crisis, Aurora has also been home to an extensive Community Policing program, in which homeowners come together with police to correct behaviors and people that are liability to a maximal return on investment. This includes a focus on "illegal" migration and unlicensed commercial activities. From the perspective of capital, "community" is a set of activities that facilitate self-policing across all aspects of social and interpersonal life—from patterns of consumption to forms of identification, bodily expression and desire.

**EFFIGY MOUNDS  
from sacred sites to logistical deathscapes**

Effigy mounds are sacred sites, raised knolls of earth built and stylized in the shapes of animals, symbols and humanoid figures by indigenous societies. The Bird Effigy mounds at this site were between 2,000 and 5,000 years old; they were destroyed by 1909. They represented the southernmost



Services, an international food logistics operator, across from a storage yard for city garbage trucks.

**BURIAL MOUNDS  
on ecological interconnectedness**

The location of the body on Native lands, its residence within the soil for millennia, creates an inherent relationship of reciprocity and respect between the body and the people, who feel it is their responsibility to care for the land. The body, in its decomposition, is fulfilling a relationship of reciprocity: the earth supports the body during life, and in death, the body supports the earth. Halting this process threatens both ecological and spiritual stability. — (Re)Constructing Bodies, Suzanne J. Crawford

Three conical precolonial burial mounds exist here, along the glacial ridge that is the riverbank. They are unmarked and not officially recognized for protection by the state. Their tops have been destroyed in the last year, according to local historian Georgianna Vitti. What is the function of state recognition and preservation in protecting such sites from violent erasure? What is at stake in archaeological study? Can anyone "own" indigenous human remains or the land that they embedded into? Can the land and the ancestors buried in it be made distinct, disunited and severed from each other? Local excursions and conversations to this site opened up questions of how to activate knowledges and practices from below, beyond the framework of state recognition vs erasure and capitalist development.

**DEVIL'S CAVE  
the specter of resistance**

The Legend of Devil's Cave is the story of a burgeoning settler society whose plans of peaceful coexistence on occupied lands become thwarted by Indigenous warriors

who defied both the will of the United States and the diplomatic politics of Potawatomi Chief Waubensee. As Potawatomi rebels began scalping and robbing settlers of their possessions, the United States Government beckoned Chief Waubensee to placate his people; a decision was made to banish any warriors who would not cease the attacks. Soon after, there were reports of a "glowing specter" appearing and attacking unsuspecting settlers, an "evil" spirit unleashed upon the town. The spirit was followed to a cave alongside Big Turtle River (Fox River). When settlers set fire to the cave, a demon was seen running out and jumping into the river. The legend is unclear if the rebel died from burning or drowning.

**WIG WAM  
the disappearance that will not happen**

This site was the last village before the US government imposed the forced removal of the Potawatomi. But Indian disappearance was never realized; Aurora and Xicagoland are still home to Indigenous cultural institutions and spiritual centers, education programs, harvesting and planting communities, language reclamation efforts, ecology teaching and self-organization.

**MIGRATION AND EXTRACTION  
storytelling on the tracks**

The expansion of the railway created an infrastructure for organizing land and society at a continental scale. Local histories of migration across the Americas are intimately linked to the rail system, which produce an enduring racialized geography—the East side is Black/Brown, immigrant and poor, West side is white and wealthy. Today's rail boom threatens waters, lands and indigenous societies across the Americas: crude oil-by-rail, carrying highly explosive fracked Bakken oil from the Dakotas, and tar sands oil from the Athabasca regions. Local resistance to the so-called "bomb trains" has focused on the dangers they represent for communities along the rail lines. How has indigenous resurgence defined a Black Snake beyond the pipeline or oil train?

**EL JARDIN**

Our journey ends with a gathering to share food, knowledges and reflection at the corner of Union and Claim Streets, at El Jardin. This is the community center of Caracol (the Snail), and autonomous group that draws its roots from Mayan communities and Mexican Zapatismo thought. Lento, pero avanzo. Zapatista communities call their centers "caracoles," illustrating that empowerment spirals from a peoples' direct participation outward.

